

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS

DECEMBER 15, 2015

Strengthening Consumer Protections

During emergencies and major natural or man-made disasters including, but not limited to, earthquakes, fires, floods, or civil disturbances, there may be a temporary spike in demand for food, repair or reconstruction services, emergency or medical supplies, hotels, motels, or gasoline. Under such circumstances, there is a heightened risk to consumers that business owners and service providers will exploit the crisis and significantly increase the prices of goods and services that are absolute necessities. To combat this phenomenon, commonly known as price gouging, many jurisdictions have implemented “anti-gouging” laws that are intended to curb such price increases after a disaster or crisis has occurred or been declared.

Given the anticipated impact of El Niño on Los Angeles County (County) and its potential to further compound the existing homeless crisis, it is important that the County’s ordinances be updated to ensure that there are sufficient consumer protections against excessive and unjustified increases in prices.

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MOTION

RIDLEY-THOMAS_____

KUEHL_____

KNABE_____

ANTONOVICH_____

SOLIS_____

I THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

1. Direct the County Counsel in coordination with the Department of Consumer and Business Affairs to report back within 30 days with an ordinance for adoption that:
 - a) Regulates price increases of food, repair or reconstruction services, emergency or medical supplies, hotels, motels, gasoline and any other consumer goods and services deemed vital and necessary for the health, safety, and welfare of citizens during the time of local emergency or major disaster;
 - b) Outlines the process for reporting complaints and violations and the disposition of such matters including, but not limited to administrative and/or legal remedies;
 - c) Identifies penalties for violations; and
 - d) Specifies Los Angeles County departments and/or non-County entities responsible for enforcement.
2. Direct the Director of Consumer and Business Affairs to report back within 21 days with a public awareness plan to educate citizens about the risks and the protections within the County ordinance and existing state law.

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